(b) if so, the action taken on the Chief Minister's letter dated 17th December, 1999?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI MUNI LALL): (a) and (b) A letter dated 17.12.1999 was received from the Chief Minister, Andhra Pradesh. The letter, among other things, has sought certain procedural and legal changes through amendments to notifications issued under section 10(1) of the Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970 to ensure that contractual operations in coal companies are made legally permissible to allow unhindered deployment of contract labour in various operations. It has also been suggested that this will help the domestic coal industry survive and ward off the threat of large scale lay offs on account of imported coal coming in very cheap.

The Central Government has considered the matter. It has been observed that keeping in view the decision of the Supreme Court in the matter of Air India Statutory Cooperation Vs. United Labour Union and Others to the effect that the Central Government, having abolished the contract labour, is denuded of its power to go once over into the self same question, amendment to the notifications, as suggested, would be non-est in law.

Welfare Schemes for Agriculture Labourers

4948. SHRI A. VIJAYA RAGHAVAN: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken any step to improve the life of the agricultural labourers;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) what are the welfare schemes for agricultural labourers prevailing in our country; and

(d) whether Government will put a comprehensive central legislation for agricultural labourers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI MUNI LALL): (a) to (d) The Government is implementing a number of schemes for the welfare of rural workers including agricultural labour in the country like Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS) and "Swarnjayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojna" (SGSY) which has been launched from April, 1999 by amalgamating certain earlier programmes

like IRDP, TRYSEM, DWCRA etc. SGSY is a holistic programme covering all aspects of self employment such as organisation of the poor into self-help groups, training, credit, technology, infrastructure and marketing.

The proposal for enactment of a comprehensive central legislation for agricultural workers is under consideration of the Government.

Changes in Labour Laws

4949. SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are of the view that there is need to accelerate changes in labour laws;

(b) if so, whether any steps have been taken in this regard;

(c) whether he had urged trade unions to adopt a positive attitude towards economic reforms, as stated in the "Hindustan Times" dated 15th April, 2000; and

(d) if so, response with details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI MUNI LALL): (a) to (d) Review/updation of Labour Laws is a continuous process and amendments/fresh legislations are made depending on the results of the review. The Second National Commission on Labour set up by the Government vide resolution issued on 15.10.1999 would comprehensively review labour laws to ensure both consistency of labour laws with the general changes taking place in the economic policy and also to provide for greater welfare of the working class. The 36th Session of the Indian Labour Conference was held on 14-15th April, 2000. While inaugurating the Conference, the Prime Minister stated the obvious when he said that the trade union movement today is standing at crossroads in history. While emphasizing his Government's commitment to broadening and accelerating the scope of internal reforms to increase the prosperity of all Indians, he stated that the government is following a cautious policy towards globalisation so that it can protect and promote national interests including the interests of peasants and workers. The Prime Minister, therefore, reiterated the position of the Government that labour is an integral part of economic reforms and the Government never believed that there could be any inherent antagonism between labour, capital, management, society and the State. The Ministry of Labour welcomed the suggestion of Prime Minister to trade unions to adopt a positive and supportive